

ESTABLISHING THE PROPER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH AD/HD¹

Creating Low-Distraction Work Areas

- Always seat this student near the source of instruction and/or stand near student when giving instructions to reducing barriers and distractions between him and the lesson. Seat student with back to the class when possible but ensure seat is still a part of the normal class seating configuration.
- Have all students use earphones with equipment that has audio features to prevent broadcast into the work area.
- Try not to place students with AD/HD near air conditioners, high traffic areas, heaters, or doors or windows.
- Provide quiet, distraction free area for test-taking. Once the student begins a task requiring a quiet, distraction-free environment, no interruptions should be permitted until the student is finished.
- Produce a stimuli-reduced study area. Let all students have access to this area so the student with AD/HD will not feel different.
- When possible, surround students with AD/HD with good role models. This is more difficult to facilitate in training programs for older youth and adults.
- Encourage peer tutoring and cooperative/collaborative learning.

Giving Instructions²

- Maintain eye contact during verbal instruction.
- Make directions clear and concise. Simplify complex directions. Avoid multiple commands. Check for understanding.
- Repeat instructions in a calm, positive manner, if needed.

¹ "Teaching Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder," Update 1998, ERIC Digest E569 ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, Reston, VA., The Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, VA; <http://ericec.org>.

² ERIC Digest E569, "Teaching Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder," Update 1998.

- Gradually reduce the amount of assistance over time attempting to foster greater confidence and independence.³
- Help the student feel comfortable with seeking assistance as many youth with AD/HD will not seek assistance.

Testing

- Make sure you are testing knowledge and not attention span.
- Give extra time for certain tasks. Students with AD/HD may work slowly. Do not penalize them for needing extra time.
- Keep in mind that individuals, particularly children and youth with AD/HD are easily frustrated. Stress, pressure, and fatigue can break down their self-control and lead to poor behavior.
- Provide practice questions for study.
- Give open book tests.
- Vary format of tests.
- Allow student to respond to questions orally or read questions aloud.
- Allow use of technology – calculator, word processor, etc.
- Provide extra time to complete test.
- Give parts of test in more than one sitting.
- Allow opportunity to take test in another room or at another time of day.
- Allow retake of test when appropriate.
- Give more frequent short quizzes and fewer long tests.
- The student will inform the teacher of his need for additional time by writing a note on the test to arrange for more time whenever he/she is unable to finish a test in the standard amount of time provided to other students.

³ This does not apply to accommodations unless the student has improved to a point that s/he no longer needs assistance or s/he no longer meets the legal qualification for accommodations.

- Provide the student with other opportunities, methods, or test formats to demonstrate what is known.
- Allow the student to take tests or quizzes in a quiet place in order to reduce distractions.
- Always allow this student to use a calculator to check his/her work.
- Consider allowing this student to use a calculator when it is clear the student understands math calculation concepts.

Supervision and Discipline

- Remain calm, state the infraction of the rule, and avoid debating or arguing with the student. Have established consequences for misbehavior.
- Administer consequences immediately without harshness and monitor proper behavior frequently.
- Enforce classroom rules consistently.
- Avoid ridicule and criticism.

Providing Encouragement

- Reward more than you punish in order to build self-esteem.
- Praise immediately any and all good behavior and performance. Find ways to be encouraging.
- Change rewards if they are not effective in motivating behavioral change.
- Teach the individual to reward himself or herself. Encourage positive self-talk (e.g., "You did a great job on staying focused during your testing today. How do you feel about that?"). This encourages the individual to think positively about himself or herself.
- Look for positives. Provide immediate feedback to the student each time and every the student accomplishes desired behavior and/or achievement – no matter how small the accomplishment.
- Recognize that student with AD/HD-LD perform at their best in a safe environment—academically, emotionally and socially. Give any needed reprimands privately and whenever possible, provide public recognition for student accomplishments.

- Encourage empathy and understanding from staff, peer group, and do not permit humiliation, teasing or scape-goating.
- Provide clearly stated rules and consequences and expectations that are consistently carried out for all students.
- Recognize EFFORTS the student employs toward attaining a goal and recognize the problems resulting from skill deficits vs. non-compliance.
- Accept characteristics of AD/HD-LD, especially inconsistent performance.
- Understand the effects associated with medications used to treat AD/HD. Avoid any derogatory comments about the student's use of medicine or of the medicine itself.
- Recognize that no two students with AD/HD-LD are alike and that there are multiple approaches to working with each AD/HD-LD student that can and will be different from student to student.
- Be flexible.
- Accept poor handwriting and printing.
- Do not attribute or stop attributing student's poor performance to laziness, poor motivation, or other internal traits.
- Recognize that AD/HD-LD is neurological and beyond the control of the student.

Other Educational Recommendations

- Conduct assessment to determine learning style and skill assessment testing, if available, to determine strengths and weaknesses. Ask student about prior educational, psychological, and/or neurological testing. If data is available, review for info on cognitive ability and comorbid diagnosis. Provide student with appropriate referral info if warranted (through the Center Director's Designee).
- Offer peer tutoring and/or tutoring staff by other volunteers.
- Place in a class that has a low student-teacher ratio.
- Provide social skills, organizational skills training, and cognitive restructuring training